

GENERAL ISSUES

Yekaterinburg is the largest city in the Urals. It was founded in 1723 as a fortress and a plant, and further on became the embodiment of the Russian state history.

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CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE URALS AND SIBERIA

A geopolitical position of our Region, at the border of two continents - Europe and Asia, a long history of coexistence in the given territory of Slavonic, Turkic and Finno-Ugric peoples which in fact were different civilizations at that time, geographical remoteness and seclusion contributed to development and, simultaneously, preservation of an original culture of the Urals.

The Urals, with its richest and unique natural, paleontological, archeological, historical monuments; zoological, botanical and mineralogical exhibits, paintings and decorative art works, in many respects is still unknown to the world community.

Discovery of a beautiful and unique culture of the Ural peoples, both in its historical aspect and in its present reality, is still in prospect for the world.

It is in this context that we see the importance of this World Conference.

The Sverdlovsk Oblast already has an experience of joint work with UNESCO, in particular, in preservation of mining and metallurgical architectural monuments in Nizhny Tagil, Verkhnyaya Salda, and in development of comprehensive measures to improve ecological situation in Nizhny Tagil.

The Government of the Oblast, its Department of Culture are open for further development of a constructive cooperation with UNESCO in all the spheres of culture (theatre, music, literature, dances, painting, cinema, TV, cultural and educational work, work of clubs, libraries, archives and museums, folk lore, amateur talent activities, etc.) and in

various forms (cultural exchanges, protection of cultural values, holding of festivals and contests, R&D, export and import activities, training and upgrading skills of art workers, etc.).

For this work to be effective, it is expedient to organize it on both bilateral and multi-lateral basis, with agreements regulating developing relations and with mutual obligations of the parties.

We have enough rights and powers under the Oblast Charter, rights granted by Federal and Oblast legislation, to make this cooperation fruitful.

Two years ago, there was developed a Concept of Cultural Potential Preservation and Development of the Sverdlovsk Oblast under Market Relations Conditions. Besides, there were developed programmes of search for models of governing social and cultural situation in a number of territories of our Region. We continue to develop such programmes this year, too. That is why we are interested in organizational, technical, ecological, and other kinds of support on the part of UNESCO to develop and fulfil comprehensive programmes (projects) on preservation, development and worldwide popularization of cultural and natural heritage of the Middle Urals.

Proceeding from the above considerations, we make the following suggestions:

1. To discuss at the conference main ideas, principles and statements of one of the programmes "Development of Cultural Activities in Alapayevsk" (establishment of a historical and cultural centre as an aspect of preservation of cultural and historical heritage of Alapayevsk) with the further transfer of it to UNESCO and, after the required examination and introduction of the necessary amendments, to include it into the plan of work of this world organization.

2. To organize, in the nearest future, a joint development of a programme on preservation, development and popularization of architectural and historical ensemble of the town of Verhoturye.

3. To consider the issue of organizing in Yekaterinburg a Centre of Information and Cultural Technologies and an International College of Culture and Information Management with the aim of raising the level of representation of UNESCO in the Region and deepening mutually beneficial cooperation.

It is necessary for the World Conference not to limit itself with a verbal, purely theoretical discussion of raised problems, but to adopt at the end of it a capable final document which will start practical activities.